

CD-Rom for Canadian Historians

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Since a chance discovery a few years ago in the library of the University of Houston, CD-ROM technology has been integrating itself into my research skills. I have grown quite leery of technological "fixes" and the "latest" software, but CD-ROM is simply useful to the historian and increasingly unavoidable. Larger bookstores are switching to a CD-ROM version of Books In Print. Multi-volume reference books, such as Disserations Abstracts, already sold in CD-ROM, will be unavailable in paper within this decade, and that will affect us as historians. Here is a thumbnail sketch

of my last year looking around at CD-ROM.

Similar to the silver audio CD, the CD-ROM contains a bundle of retrieval software and around 650 megabytes of information. Inserted into a CD-ROM disk drive, it is read or searched through a software menu on your computer screen. CD-ROM is rapidly becoming a basic service at university libraries, where a handout sheet should be all you need to get started. The other route is to buy a CD-ROM drive for your own computer. Prices are dropping fast. Recent Canadian

prices for brand name drives, with a selection of general CD-ROMs are around \$400-\$599. In New York I saw a generic internal CD-ROM drive for \$199 US and for a hundred more you can get an external unit that can also play those classical audio CDs as you work. Keep to brand names and new models if you can. New drives are simply faster and more reliable.

The most obvious use of the CD-ROM is literature searches. The commercial company ABC-CLIO publishes CD-ROM historical abstracts for Europe (Historical Abstracts or HA) and North



Prizes and Scholarships / Prix et bourses

The Royal Ontario Museum announces the annual **Veronika Gervers Research Fellowship in Textile and Costume History** of up to \$9,000 CAN to be awarded to a scholar working on any aspect of textile or costume history whose research makes direct use of, or supports, any part of the ROM collections that cover a broad range of time and geography. For information, contact Chair, Veronika Gervers Memorial Fellowship, Textile Department, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2C6; (416) 586-5790. Deadline for applications is November 15, each year.

Villa I Tatti: The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies offers up to fifteen fellowships for independent study on any aspect of the Italian Renaissance for the academic year 1994-95. The fellowships, which can be stipendiary or nonstipendiary, are for scholars of any nationality, normally postdoctoral and in the earlier stages of their careers. Application deadline October 15, 1993. For more information, contact Villa I Tatti Office, Harvard University, University Pl., 124 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge, MA 02138-5762. (617) 495-8042.

The **Arctic Institute of North America** announces the **Lorraine Allison Scholarship**. This scholarship is open to graduate students of high standing who demonstrate a

commitment to northern research that is beneficial to Native and non-Native northerners. Valued at \$2000, the award is tenable at any Canadian university. Contact Mike Robinson, AINU, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4.

The Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program, open to educators of all subjects and levels, administers teacher exchanges between the United States and thirty-four international countries. Applicants must hold a full-time teaching position at the time of application and must be able to secure a leave of absence with salary. Most exchanges are for one academic year. Application deadline October 15, 1993. For more information, contact Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program, 600 Maryland Ave., SW, Rm. 142, Washington, DC 20024, Attn: E/ASX. 1-800-726-0479.

The **Center for Northern Studies, Wolcott, Vermont** has scholarships available to undergraduate and graduate students with northern research interests. The Center is affiliated with the Northern Studies Program at Middlebury College and is devoted exclusively to northern research and teaching. Other affiliations include Bowdoin, Dartmouth, McGill and Vermont universities. Undergraduates can spend their junior year at the Center, while graduate students can pursue a Master of Arts. More information can be gained by contacting P. Zoe Kettlewell, Center for Northern Studies, Wolcott, Vermont, USA 05680.

America (American History and Life or AHL). Each disk contains five or ten years of abstracts. (ABC-CLIO has a Canadian toll-free number: 1-800-368-6868). AHL has 90,000 entries, including books, 2,000 journals, and 10,000 dissertations. The subscription cost, aimed at institutions, is still very high, \$2000-\$3,000 US. Their latest product, the 60,000 entry Bibliography of Native North Americans on Disc, is priced much lower, at \$795US. If the price drops this will be accessible to the broader market of individual researchers. One possibility is for the CHA to approach others with similar professional interests, such as the AHA and OAH, to negotiate educational discounts for members buying select CD-ROMs.

Searching the multi-volume annual print versions of AHL has always been, for me, a clumsy tiresome experience. CD-ROM lets you select author, subject, reviewer, journal, year, and so forth, and get fast results. The bonus comes when you learn how to download your search results of abstracts or bibliographic citations to your own floppy. The resulting ASCII file can be read by any wordprocessor. Get a reference librarian to show you how to do download to disk. Once you learn to do this on one CD-ROM system you will find most others function similarly. Other bibliographic CD-ROMs useful to the historian, but uneven in their coverage of Canadian material, are the Social Science Index, Humanities Index, Periodicals Index, Citations Index and Dissertations Abstracts. Canadian historical literature is not that vast a field and perhaps we should think about a comprehensive project to put the indexes of our regional and main journals, including defunct journals, and dissertations, on our own CD-ROM.

Indexes and descriptive pools of researchers are well along the CD-ROM publishing route. Canadian social scientists, including historians, have been listing themselves for some years in a database, the Canadian Register of Research and Researchers

in the Social Sciences, which government and industry search. The Register is part of a trend toward CD-ROM publication of faculty and departmental indexes for all of North American universities, and may lead to a global academic index. Electronic indexes of academics and their publication record will change how we establish specialty groups, conferences, locate candidates for positions and run journals. The c.v. may become a standardized annual publication in itself and verification of its contents will become easier in a database format. However this shift is not without implications for academic freedom when specific forms of research become controversial.

In Ontario, secondary students will soon begin using CD-ROM in their history courses. The province has licensed the use of Alastair Sweeny's Canadisk CD-ROM. The disk has 500 megabytes of point-form information on Canadian history and includes 2,500 sound files of music, events and speeches. The new Mac version will contain video clips from our past. For the quantifiers there are poll-by-poll results from the last two Federal elections. Sweeny is planning a disk on the United States and a global disk.

At a workstation in the reference room of the National Archives of Canada is another CD-ROM of interest to historians. ArchiVIA is a bilingual partial listing of holdings of the Archives. The CD-ROM sells for \$169 plus taxes and contains 400,000 records. Based only on a brief ten minute use, it does not include those useful historical summaries found in MG and RG finding aids. It does consist of five databases: archival holdings, microform holdings, art transparencies, maps on microfiche, and an archival bibliography. You can search a term through all or only one database.

In several minor ways the software for the ArchiVIA disk seems superior to that used by AHL. For example, I hit a wrong key and returned to the search screen. When I got back to the citation screen, the software remembered which citation I had been read-

ing. The AHL software always returned me to the first citation, frustrating if you were halfway through sixty entries. Downloading archive citations gives you both citation accuracy, and the ability to print up a research agenda before that field trip or phone call to Ottawa. My fingers are crossed that ArchiVIA will not only be a success as more people become aware of it, but that it will also be the model for the much needed revival of the Union List of Manuscripts.

CD-ROM publications are surfacing constantly. British Columbia already has their statutes on a full search CD-ROM. Perseus is available as both a CD-ROM or a videodisc. This hypercard bundle allows students to link archaeological information on 800 ancient sites, artifacts, reference books and atlases, for research with a fully searchable corpus of classical Greek literature. The Grand Robert and the Oxford English Dictionary are CD-ROMs that allow you to pull out all the words related to a specific activity, or originating from a specific time or people. For our future, there are all those acidifying sessional papers and royal commissions, waiting to take a chunk out of someone's life. A Canadian historical census disk, a CD-ROM of maps, or a hypercard version of the Canadian Historical Atlas seem logical projects as future teaching tools.

Fusion du CRSH et du Conseil des Arts

Le Sénat canadien a rejeté en dernière lecture, par un vote de 39 à 39 le projet de loi C-93 qui visait à fusionner le Conseil des Arts et le Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines. Les deux conseils resteront distincts. Mme Leduc, directrice du CRSH, qui devait être directrice du nouvel organisme, continuera à diriger les deux organismes jusqu'au mois de septembre 1993.